

How Crab got a Crack on his Back



A story of bravery and courage

by Sally Murphy

How Crab got a crack on his Back: A story of bravery and courage
by Sally Anne Montserin (Sally Murphy)
Copyright © 2025

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, audio, visual or otherwise, without prior permission of the copyright owner. Nor can it be circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without similar conditions including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

ISBN: 978-9769746602

Illustrator: Marsha Gomes-Mc Kie

Published in Trinidad and Tobago



**In memory of my mother,
Dolly Murphy, who told us many of
these stories.**

**They were told to her by her
grandfather. His name was
Daddy Okojee**



Gangan Samandaye was a very old witch. She lived in a clearing in the woods, where she had chickens, a cow, a goat, a dog, and a cat.

As she walked along, skin wrinkled, her hair a bush of silver-white, eyes sharp and piercing, the animals stayed out of her way.



One day, Gangan sat on a chair in her home, removing fleas from her head. She did this by taking her head off and holding it in her lap.

On a table, next to her were three eggs in a calabash and a bottle of milk.

Smiling to herself, she remembered how she scared the chickens and the cow with her walking stick and her piercing shriek.



As she sat there, she heard a voice outside. It was the voice of a girl saying, *“Hello, hello, is anybody home?”*

Looking through the window Gangan Samandaye saw a little girl wearing a pretty dress with sneakers on her feet. Gangan Samandaye said *“Hello, what are you looking for?”*

“Well, said the girl, I can’t find my way home, can you help me?”

“Sure!” Said Gangan Samandaye. “Come inside and drink some milk and then I’ll see if I could help you.”

When the girl had finished, the witch said to her, “do you think that you could guess my name?”

“Of course I can!” Said the girl.

So, she began to guess some names. “Could it be Samantha, Indra, Genevieve, Kathleen, Rohini, Jeanette, Janice, Nichola?”



“None of them,” said Gangan Samandaye. “Now I must go out for a little while, and when I come back, if you cannot tell me my name, you will have to stay here with me.”

“Forever?” Said the little girl.

Gangan Samandye just turned around, took up a calabash and her stick, and said “yes, forever” then left. The girl was now really scared.

What was she to do? She saw some animals nearby and went to each of them, asking for the old lady's name.

They all looked away from her: the cow, goat, dog, and cat all looked away.

They were all terrified of the old woman. She asked the cow, she asked the goat, she asked the dog, she asked the cat, and she asked the chicken. None of them answered.



By this time, crab had come out of his home. It was a hole in the ground.

He saw what was happening.

He knew that if the girl did not guess the old lady's name, she would never see her mother again.

He thought of his family, his wife, and children, and knew that he could not let that happen.



**So, he came up to her and said:
*“I will tell you her name. It is
Gangan Samandaye!”***

***“Oh, thank you! Thank you!
Thank you!”* Said the girl and
went into the house.**

**Gangan Samandaye returned a
little later, and as soon as she saw
her, the little girl said *“I know
your name. Your name is Gangan
Samandaye!”***

Gangan Samandaye threw a tantrum.

She jumped up and down, so annoyed she could hardly talk. She shouted at the little girl, *“Who told you? Get out! Turn left twice and you will find the way!”*

Going outside, she knew that it had to be one of the animals that told the little girl her name. Taking up her stick in fury, she charged outside in a rage.

She first saw the dog, and this is what she said: “*dog, dog, dog, samandaye, you who say I name Gangan Smanadaye?*” The dog shook his head and said “*no, no, no, samandaye, not me say you name Gangan Samandaye!*”

She next saw cow, and said: “*cow, cow, cow, samandaye, you who say I name Gangan Samandaye?*” Cow shook his head and said “*Moo, moo, noo, samandaye, not me say you name Gangan Samandaye.*”



By this time, crab had come up to the old woman. He did not wait for her to ask.

He raised his claws up in the air, shaking his claws and moving from side to side. *“Yes, yes yes, samandaye. Is me, Crab, who say you name Gangan Samandaye!”*

The old woman lifted her stick and brought it down on the back of crab.



Crab ran down into his home. When his children and his wife saw what had happened, they got some “Wonder of the world” plant leaves, put them on crab’s back, and wrapped him in some plantain leaves.

The next day, crab was up and around, his back badly cracked.

His wife and children surrounded him. “Oh, Papa,” said his daughter, “we are so proud of what you did!”

“Yes,” said crab, “you must be proud of me because a very cruel thing was happening to that little girl.

Whenever you see something wrong, you should try to stop it even if it means you might get hurt.

Now I will never be afraid of anyone or anything. I stood up to the wicked witch and will never be afraid of her again.”

“I want you all to learn this lesson: Never be afraid to do the right thing.”

Since that time, all crabs have cracks on their backs.







THE END